



Songs, games and turkey dinner were part of the holiday celebration for homeless families.

# STUDENTS IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD

BY JUDIE SCHWARTZ

**GETTING INVOLVED** in the neighborhood seems natural to Rico McGowan. "I wanted to give something back in return for all the opportunities I've had," explains the third-year law student and president of the Student Bar Association. "We have an obligation to work with people in the neighborhoods that are close to the university."

The involvement has been so gratifying that McGowan expects community service to be a lifelong interest. As SBA president, he has expanded several existing programs and raised money to help fund them. This year the organization will sponsor tutorial and mentoring programs at the George

Street Elementary School, a winter holiday dinner, a spring carnival and a year-long food drive.

The SBA acts as an umbrella for two dozen specialized student organizations within the School of Law; it also initiates community service projects in which all students may participate.

The George Street Elementary School partnership—now in its fourth year—is perhaps the core effort. Some 35 law students volunteer at the school each week, spending at least an hour tutoring children and serving as mentors.

Clearly, it's this kind of continuous, direct personal attention that can really make a difference. The fifth graders invited McGowan to speak at their graduation—and gave him a standing ovation! "The students and staff are most appreciative of the time, talents and efforts of the association," wrote Principal Barbara A. Hill, and "we would indeed welcome the mentoring program for a second year."

Law students were hosts for 200 residents of area homeless shelters at December's third annual holiday celebration. This year's activities included for the first time a full turkey dinner and a Kwanza presentation. "We just wanted to give these families a break from all their cares. We wanted them to have some fun," McGowan says. The images of children singing and playing, parents relaxed and enjoying the celebration attest to its success.

Funded in part by the School of Law's Alumni Association, the event also was supported by Bill and Dukes Catering, Murphy and Guttierrez and Bar-Bri, a bar review company.

New this spring will be a carnival for children from area shelters, complete with games, balloons, face painting and entertainment. Throughout the school year the SBA collects nonperishable food for distribution through organizations like the House of Ruth.

McGowan is especially grateful to all the law students who work on SBA activities, and to the Alumni Association for its support. The organization relies on donations to fund many of its efforts, and welcomes contributions. For more information, contact McGowan in care of the School of Law.

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